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at least, the effective unit of law and self-defence was formerly the sub-chiefdom.[59]

In both sub-chiefdom and kingdom the chief (a term used here for both king and sub-chief) passed through a cycle of rites to become truly chief and was surrounded, assisted, and checked by titled ministers.[60] The future chief was selected from persons of chiefly stock. My informants stated that a new chief might be related either patrilineally or matrilineally to former chiefs; all other sources state that the chiefdom can only be held by somebody *patrilineally* of chiefly blood, with the exception of Santos Brandão writing on the Huambo kingdom.[61] The selection was the responsibility of the Mwekalia, whose role was to represent the people *vis-à-vis* the king, an opposition which is expressed in the Umbundu saying 'the chief is a guest, the Mwekalia is a man of the country'. When asked to explain this saying, the Ovimbundu point out that many chiefs come from outside the chiefdom, and also that 'If the chief does something wrong, we can send him away'.[62]

In such a constitutional deposition of the chief which nineteenth century observers describe as taking place fairly frequently,[63] the main responsibility fell on the Mwekalia. The cycle of royal rites consisted of the ceremonial entry of the chief into his capital and his taking of a new name, the rebuilding of certain shrines, a large-scale hunt, the building of an archway intended as a magical defence to the capital, and finally an act

[59] Informants.

[60] For the king and his ministers see especially Hastings, pp. 29–71 (based on Bailundo), and for other details of the royal court see Serpa Pinto, p. 167 (based on Bie).

[61] For references to patrilineal succession see Serpa Pinto, p. 159, Capello and Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca* (London, 1882), p. 81, Hastings, p. 42, Childs, p. 22. Santos Brandão (*Mensário Administrativo*, July–August, 1950) gives a list of the kings of Huambo where there had been two successive royal lines, and this shows several cases of succession by sisters' sons. (The Umbundu text he gives makes this quite clear.)

[62] The underlying idea is not so much that the chiefly stock is of immigrant descent but rather that the people of one chiefdom call somebody from outside to rule over them, who can be sent away if he misbehaves. Of course people living within a chiefdom are not excluded, but this point about the chief being a stranger is very strongly emphasized.

[63] Childs, pp. 22–23 and references given there.

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of ritual cannibalism (*oku lia ekongo*) after which he could not be deposed.[64]

Hastings in describing the principal ministers of the Bailundo court states that the Mwekalia and the Galamboli or Ngambole (whose function was to remember traditions) were representative of the indigenous pre-Jaga stock, the Kesongo who was the war leader was a slave from another tribe, and the Otjinduli was of immigrant stock, and points out that these represent the three sources from which the Ovimbundu sprang.[65]

At the sub-chiefdom level some of the titles found in the kingdoms would be found combined, and the chief's court, where cases were judged, was composed both of titled ministers living at the chief's village and of the village headmen (some of whom were also title-holders). The sub-chief represented his people to the outer world, led them in communal ritual and judged, with his councillors,[66] their disputes. Hastings describes a case thus: 'When all the members of the court are seated in a circle, with an empty space in the centre, the plaintiff's counsel then relates the case, after which the lawyer for the defendant does likewise for his side. The chief in turn makes general comments. Lusenje, the official, whose duty it is to keep order at court and to announce the speakers, then calls on the accuser to come forward and make his statement.'[67]

While the sub-chiefdom was the largest unit in which law and order reigned undisputed, there existed alliances and cross-cutting relationships providing a contact outside its area. There was the *tjisoko* alliance which existed between two sub-chiefdoms which were separated by a third. Gumba sub-chiefdom was thus allied to Ndjandju from which it was separated by Chicunda, and messengers from Gumba and Ndjandju travelled together to Bailundo once a year to carry tribute. Apparently a sub-chiefdom had only one *tjisoko* partner. The relationship was one of funeral friendship; *vakwatjisoko* (*tjisoko* partners) undertook the burial of those who died without kinsfolk and also ordinary

[64] This is based on information from Gumba. See also Magyar, pp. 270–77; Hastings, pp. 43–45; Childs p. 81.

[65] Hastings, p. 60.

[66] Informants.

[67] Hastings, pp. 142–43.